

YOUTH WORK

Party Must Help Y.C.L. Win Youth for Class Battles

THE sharpening class relations in the country, the N.R.A., the preparations for war, and the developments toward fascism, all raise to a new plane the question of work among the younger generation.

We cannot call ourselves a revolutionary Party without realizing that the working class youth play a very decisive and determining role in the class war. But too often our Party looks upon the question of work among the youth the same as work among other sections of the population, without realizing that it is the youth who will carry the guns in the next imperialist war and will carry the guns in the final civil war.

The winning of the young generation in America is not a very difficult task once the Party understands its importance. There is no section of the American population today which is so ready for the revolutionary way out of the crisis as the working class youth. The youth in America today have no future before them under the present system. Capitalism can offer them nothing and millions of them are beginning to see this.

This change in the working class youth, in our possibilities of work among them, is experienced every day in the week, on every battlefield of the working class. The youth are in the forefront of the picket lines, of the unemployed demonstrations, in every single struggle in which the working class and the Party are engaged at the present time.

While I emphasize this radicalization of the working youth, I want also to emphasize one other point, that is, that this youth, this new generation in America, has not lived through the experiences of the last war and the post-war period. This new young generation does not remember the betrayals of the reformists, and for this reason, despite their militancy, they are susceptible to the left phrases of the reformists and can be misled by them. It is also important to remember that even the fascists attempt by the utilization of left phrases to create a stronghold among the working class youth, especially among the unemployed masses of youth.

How Do We Fight for the Youth?

The Party must understand that the question of winning the young generation has as great an importance today to the revolutionary movement as the development of mass trade unions and the development of a mass movement among the Negro people. But how do we fight for these youth? How can we talk about winning the youth for the revolutionary way out of the crisis, when in practice we have no different approach to the masses of youth than the reformist organizations? First of all, I want to ask the comrades some questions: Is it an accident that the first position that our revolutionary trade unions and our Party took on the question of child labor was no different from that of Roosevelt and the A. F. of L.? Is it an accident that none of our unions today is raising sharply the question of discrimination against the youth as a result of the industrial codes? These are no accidents whatever.

The Electrical Industrial Code signed by the manufacturers and agreed to by the A. F. of L. has the following clause: "Employers shall not employ anyone under the age of 16 years." The code drawn up by the Steel and Metal Workers' Industrial Union for the General Electric says, "There shall be no employment of youth under the age of 18 years." The A. F. of L. and Roosevelt state no youth under the age of 16, and our unions go one step further, they say no youth under the age of 18!

Unless we wipe out this reformist approach to the youth question in our leadership, in our Party and unions, all the way down the line, we are not going to make a change in youth work. You

can't win the youth for the revolutionary way out of the crisis until you prove to them in practice that there is a difference between us and the reformists.

Every time we come here we beat ourselves on the breast and say, "We must build a mass Y.C.L." But if we fail to understand that the youth in America have special problems, special demands, that we must fight for, we will never build a mass Y.C.L. in America despite all our good intentions.

Must Understand Youth Problems to Give Leadership

When we have this understanding of the youth problem, then I think we will have some leadership for the youth work. Then, the District Organizers of our Party, instead of saying that they are too busy to give leadership to the Y.C.L., will understand that giving leadership to the Y.C.L. is as important as giving leadership to any other mass work. Then the *Daily Worker* will pay attention to the youth question, and every editorial in the *Daily Worker* which deals with the struggles of the masses of workers will also speak about the special problems of the youth. The comrades who edit the paper will understand that the Y.C.L. is the closest co-worker of the Party in the struggle for the majority of the working class, and that the *Daily Worker* must become an instrument to bring the message of the Party also to the broad masses of American youth.

In regard to the special role of the Y.C.L. and the tasks of the leadership of the Y.C.L. We are trying to do our bit of the work. Since the Extraordinary Conference, we have doubled our shop nuclei from 22 to more than 40. We have made some headway in the Young People's Socialist League, also in the struggle against war. But if anyone believes that the weak forces in the Y.C.L. alone are going to build a mass revolutionary youth movement, they are badly mistaken. How do you expect the Y.C.L. in New York, for example, to become a larger organization than the Party, when in the Party you have some 6,000 members and a relatively developed leadership, and in the Y.C.L. you have a membership of 1,000 with a relatively weak leadership? I want to raise this sharply because the Party leaders in the districts leave to the weak youth leaderships in their districts the sole responsibility for work among the youth. If this continues we are not going to make the necessary headway in our work among the American youth.

—G. GREEN.